



City of Seattle
Seattle City Council

NEWS RELEASE

Councilmember Kshama Sawant
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Sawant, Activists, and Working People to California State Legislators: "Vote 'YES' on SB403 to Ban Caste Discrimination in California!"

"If California can ban caste discrimination statewide, it will be a landmark step forward against oppression. The Democratic Party accounts for 80 percent of Senate seats, and nearly the same in the Assembly. We hope that Democratic Party elected officials will use this overwhelming majority to ensure passage of a ban against caste discrimination."

SEATTLE - Councilmember Kshama Sawant (District 3, Central Seattle), alongside activists fighting against caste discrimination, sent the following letter to California State Legislators, calling on them to vote 'YES' on the bill before them, [SB403](#), to ban caste discrimination:

"California Senate and Assembly members,

"We urge you to vote to ban caste-based discrimination in the state of California, starting with the Senate Judiciary Committee voting 'YES' on Senate Bill 403 without watering down or weakening the legislation.

"The proposed bill for California follows the historic vote on the Seattle City Council to [ban caste discrimination](#) citywide. With the February 21st vote on the legislation brought forward by socialist Councilmember Kshama Sawant, Seattle became the first jurisdiction outside South Asia to ban caste discrimination. The victory in Seattle was possible because of our grassroots movement that united working people across caste, religion, and nationality.

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Assembly. We hope that Democratic Party elected officials will use this overwhelming majority to ensure passage of a ban against caste discrimination.

“Thousands of oppressed-caste community members, particularly of South Asian descent, are currently vulnerable to workplace, housing, and other forms of discrimination, with no legal protection. This includes workers in the multibillion-dollar tech industry, many of whom courageously came out in support of our Seattle legislation, having themselves faced caste discrimination.

“Right-wing Hindu fundamentalist groups, aligned with the Narendra Modi regime in India, put up [strenuous opposition](#) to our movement to ban caste discrimination in Seattle and are also the main opponents of the proposed bill before you. Right-wing organizations like the Coalition of Hindus of North America (CoHNA), which staged a demonstration outside Senator Wahab’s office and whose supporters flooded her office with hate mail, will undoubtedly continue to wage an escalating campaign against SB403. We were able to overcome right-wing resistance by being unafraid to name the enemy and building the broadest possible movement of working people to respond to their attacks. This included producing a [FAQ](#) to rebut the right’s talking points and boldly mobilizing working people to City Council meetings to rally and speak out against caste discrimination.

“Nearly 1,500 working people signed our petition in support of banning caste-based discrimination in Seattle, more than 4,000 people sent emails to the Seattle City Council in support, over 150 organizations signed on to a support letter, and [numerous academics and experts](#) on caste oppression have endorsed the bill. The importance of this legislation is underscored by the [extensive media attention](#), locally, nationally, and even internationally.

“As renowned scholar and political activist Dr. Cornel West, in his [letter](#) supporting Councilmember Sawant’s legislation, said, ‘Learn the lesson from our shameful history of anti-blackness in the U.S. and do not repeat the failures of the past with my caste-oppressed kin.’

“We urge you to vote ‘YES’ and make California the first state in the United States to ban caste-based discrimination.

“Sincerely,

Office of Seattle City Councilmember Kshama Sawant
Ambedkar International Center
Ambedkar International Mission
Ambedkar King Study Circle
Ambedkarite Buddhist Association of Texas
Boston Study Group
Coalition of Seattle Indian Americans
Dalit Solidarity Forum
Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Educational Aid Society, Fremont, CA
Guru Ravidas Sabha, Pittsburg, CA

Hindus for Human Rights
India Civil Watch International
Indian American Muslim Council
Radha Swami Rasila Satsang Center, Fresno, CA
Socialist Alternative - Bay Area
Workers Strike Back”

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